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JAMES W. WOODMANSEE
Clermont County, Ohio

by

H. E. Perkins

1927742

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46166	James W. WOODMANSEE, Clermont County, Ohio 1949 Pamphlet



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James V. Woodmansee was born in Clermont county, Ohio, December 21, 1816. He was the youngest child of James and Agnes (Hammer) Woodmansee, natives of Pennsylvania, and pioneers of Ohio. In 1820 they moved to Jackson county, Indiana, where the mother died in 1829, and the father in 1847. On October 29, 1835, James V. Woodmansee was married to Miss Rachel Hammer, a native of Jackson county, Indiana, who was born November 14, 1810. In September, 1848, with their household goods and family of four children, Mr. and Mrs. Woodmansee left Indiana for the west, where they intended to make their future home. The trip was made in covered wagons. In a short time they arrived in Lee county, Iowa, and bought a piece of land with the expectation of making that their home. However, after raising one crop they found the place was not to their liking, so the following fall they resumed their journey westward, this time coming as far as Decatur county. Here they secured a little shack belonging to Buck Hatfield, south of the present site of Leon, and made that their home for the first month. From there they went to the home of Bryson Miller, a few miles west, and remained until spring. Mrs. Miller was an aunt of Mrs. Woodmansee. In the meantime Mr. Woodmansee entered the northeast quarter of Section 31, in what is now Decatur township. But the county was not organized until April 1, 1850, and on July 1, of that year the commissioners divided it into four civil townships, as follows: Garden Grove, Morgan, Burrell, and Hamilton. James Woodmansee and Andrew Still were appointed the first clerks of election in Burrell township.

During the first winter after his arrival in the county, Mr. Woodmansee built a double log cabin about 20x40 feet in size near

~~1850-1851~~

the northwest corner of his claim, and moved into it the following March. The loft was not completed until several years later, when he built a saw mill and sawed the native lumber for it himself. He was the first permanent settler in this township. Although John Still had previously made a claim in the eastern part of the township, he remained only a short time, which left Mr. Woodmensee the first permanent settler. The combined grist mill and saw mill which he built in 1852 or 1853, was the first in the county, if not in that part of the state. In 1860 he built a brick residence 27x40 feet in size and two stories high, replacing the log cabin of pioneer days. It was still in use in 1932.

In addition to operating his grist mill and saw mill, Mr. Woodmensee was also extensively engaged in farming and stock raising. He also had a blacksmith shop, and did a general blacksmithing business for the people of the surrounding country. In all these enterprises he was eminently successful, and by his fair and upright dealings he secured the confidence and respect of all who knew him. From time to time he added to his original quarter section of land until he became the owner of several hundred acres. At an early day he donated four or five acres of land west of the mill to be used as a cemetery. He also gave an acre of land in the northeast corner of his farm for school purposes, and on this land a log school house was built in 1857.

Ann, married S. A. Millap.

John, married Miss Mary Ann Cook.

Mary, married J. W. McLaughlin.

Reuben S., born February 24, 1848, married Miss Cinia Jones, Oct. 17, 18

George, married Miss Lydia B. Puritt.

Susan, married W. H. Grayson.

When Mr. Woodmansee came to Decatur county in 1849, which was three years after Iowa was admitted to the Union and six years before the first railroad train was run in the state, there were a few white settlers in the south part of the county, and the Mormons who had settled at Garden Grove a short time before. Aside from this, there were very few other settlers in the county. Chariton, the county seat of Lucas county, was the nearest town. However, about two and a half miles down Grand River from his place was a band of Indians, consisting of Pottawattamies, Menquakies and another tribe. They were under the leadership of Johnnie Green, a Pottawattamic chief, who was a most friendly man, and highly respected by both the Indians and their white neighbors. These Indians were harmless, but often made a great nuisance of themselves by going through the country and begging for something to eat. Usually, two or three went together -- seldom more than three. Entering the house of a white settler, one of them would approach the fire, shivering, and say: "Indian heap sick: want coffee and something to eat." And the amount of food that they would stow away did not indicate that they were seriously

ill. There were about 500 of these Indians. They lived in tepees, and surrounding their camp were a great many sugar maple trees, from which they gathered the sap every spring and made it into maple sugar. Just how long they had been here is not known, but about 1852 or 1853 they left these parts for another location. However, for a number of years they returned for a few weeks each spring and made maple sugar at their old camp. It is said that Johnny Green's last years were spent in Marshall county, Iowa, and that he was buried at Albion.

In 1847 a log school house was built on the land donated by Mr. Woodmansee, in the northeast corner of his farm. It was not large, but it accommodated as many as forty or fifty pupils during the winter months. The ceiling of the room was not much higher than the teacher's head. The seats were made by boring auger holes into slabs which had been secured at the saw mill, and driving wooden pins into them for legs, the round side of the slab being underneath. There were no backs to these seats. In the absence of desks, the pupils were obliged to hold their slates on their lap or arm. But as it was necessary to have some kind of desks to use when the writing lesson period came along, these were made by driving wooden pins into the logs along the side of the room and placing a board on top of them. This was called the writing desk. Slates and pencils were used,

but lead pencils were luxuries not indulged in. Writing pens were made of goose quills. The first teacher of the school was a man by the name of C. J. Bridges, who is said to have been a very good teacher. The three R's, "readin', 'ritin' and rithmetic," were about the only branches taught at that time. During the early years of the school there was no blackboard in the school house, so the teacher borrowed a plane of Mr. Woodmensee, smoothed off some of the logs on the inside of the room and on these he wrote the multiplication table, where it could be seen by all the pupils and studied until it was thoroughly learned. Some of the pupils came a distance of four or five miles to attend this school. This was not surprising, as the nearest school to this one was about seven miles away.

Soon after the school house was built, preaching services were held by the Methodists every two weeks during the summer. The preachers usually came from Decatur City. Among them were: Revs. Miller, Talmaage, Thompson, and Bennett. The class leaders were Clabourn Jones and Jimmie Millsap. Occasionally, a preacher from some other denomination would stop ^{here} and preach when no other services were scheduled. Sunday school was held every Sunday. When meetings were held at night, a single lamp on the teacher's desk was often the only light in the room.

In 1896, Mr. Woodmansee made a trip back to his old home in Jackson county, Indiana, for a visit with relatives and friends whom he had not seen for several years. After a month's visit he returned to Iowa, and upon his arrival in Leon he accepted an invitation to ride home with a neighbor, Jim Gray, who was driving a mule team. Soon after leaving town the team became frightened and ran away, throwing Mr. Woodmansee out of the wagon and causing serious injuries to his brain. As a result, his mind was affected during the remainder of his life, and he died March 28, 1908. 1895.

Mrs. Woodmansee, who at all times did her part in raising the family, making the home, and doing the various tasks which pioneers were called upon to do, was finally called to her reward in 1891, after an illness of only a few days with pneumonia.

Mr. and Mrs. Woodmansee will long be remembered as having been among the first settlers in the northwestern part of Decatur county, and the result of the many years of busy life which they spent here was shown not only in the homestead which they left, but in the numerous acts of kindness and generosity shown to the many neighbors who were less fortunate or progressive than themselves. They were both laid to rest in the Woodmansee cemetery, close to the old home.

Burgess Garrett married Miss Rachel Woodmansee, daughter of John and Mary (Cook) Woodmansee.

Most of the early settlers in this locality came from Indiana -- a few from Ohio. Many of them had not been very thrifty in their eastern homes and their removal to Iowa did not seem to make any great change for the better. However, there were exceptions to this rule, and one of the most progressive families in the neighborhood was that of Mr. and Mrs. Clabourn Jones, who came here from Indiana in 1856. Clabourn Jones was born in Tennessee, August 13, 1805, and was married in the same state, to Miss Mahalah Keller, who also was born in Tennessee, October 10, 1805. The date of their marriage is uncertain, but it probably was about 1826. In their native state they were engaged in farming, and continued in that business until about 1840, the year that William Henry Harrison was elected President of the United States, when they decided to change their location, and removed to Owen county, Indiana. Here they remained until 1856, when they made another change, this time coming on to Decatur county, Iowa, where they entered some Government land in Decatur township, built a log house, and began the task of making a home in a new and sparsely settled section of the country. It required twenty-one days to make the 500-mile trip with an ox team. But as three ~~three~~ of these days were Sundays when no traveling was done, they really covered the 500 miles in eighteen days, or approximately twenty-eight miles a day. Their home was about a mile northeast of that of J. W. Woodmansee, who came here from Indiana seven years earlier. Mr. and Mrs. Jones were the parents of ten children, five of whom came to Iowa with them, the other five being married, remained in Indiana. Mr. Jones died April 25, 1864, and Mrs. Jones died March 13, 1898. Both are buried in the Woodmansee cemetery. Following are the children:

Abraham, born Feb. 13, 1827: married (1) Lizzie Jourdan; married (2) Lucinda Egan; died Feb. 16, 1923.

Nancy, born March 4, 1823: married William Jourdan, in Owen county, Indiana; died Jan. 11, 1923.

Martha, born Dec. 27, 1832; married Wash Foeler, in Owen county, Indiana

Sary L., born June 4, 1834; married Henry Wheeler, in Illinois.

Mariah, born June 18, 1836: married Joseph Hazen, in Decatur county, Iowa, October, 1863; died Feb. 20, 1906.

Mary, born Feb. 22, 1839; married Van Buren Fowler, in Owen county, Indiana; died May 5, 1920.

George W., born May 29, 1843; married Hannah Furitt, in Decatur county, Iowa, Feb. 23, 1868.

Liza E., born Sept. 3, 1845; married Michael Lighthill, in Decatur county, Iowa, June 15, 1865.

Celea C., born Oct. 1, 1846; married John Timberman, in Grant City, Mo.

Ciney J., born Oct. 4, 1851; married R. S. Woodmansee, in Decatur county, Iowa, Oct. 17, 1869.

Most of the early settlers in this locality came from Indiana -- a few from Ohio. Many of them had not been very thrifty in their eastern homes and their removal to Iowa did not seem to make any change for the better. Among the early settlers in Decatur township were Mr. and Mrs. Clabourn Jones, who came from Owen county, Indiana, in 1856. They were the parents of ten children, five of whom came to Iowa with their parents, the other five being married, remained in Indiana. It required twenty-one days to make the 500-mile trip with an ox team. But as three of these days were Sundays, when no traveling was done, they really covered the 500 miles in eighteen days, or about twenty-eight miles a day. While they had very few of the luxuries of life they generally had plenty to eat and wear. Most of the articles used for food and raiment were either grown or made by the members of the family. They raised their own sheep, spun and wove the wool, and the cloth was used for making their clothing. Sod corn was planted by cutting a gash in the recently plowed ground with an ax, dropping a few kernels of corn into it and covering it up. This operation was repeated every two or three steps until the entire field was planted. The corn was later cultivated with a hoe. Some of the more progressive farmers used single-shovel plows for cultivating their corn. Vegetables were raised in abundance and furnished one of the principal articles of food as long as they could be kept from freezing during the winter. But as there were no cellars, the only way to keep the vegetables during the winter was to place them in a hole in the ground and cover with straw and dirt. Usually when the hole was opened in the winter in order to get some of the vegetables out for use, the balance of them would freeze. So they tried burying them in two holes instead of one, which extended the supply farther into the winter.

The Jones family being more progressive than most of their neighbors, took up a section of the puncheon floor of their log cabin, dug a hole in the ground and stored their vegetables in the hole. When they wanted to get some of them for use they did so by taking up a section of the floor, climbing down into the hole, and after carrying up a supply of the various articles, the puncheons were placed back in their original position. Even this primitive cellar was not always successful, and the articles stored in it would often freeze in spite of all they could do to prevent it. But it was so much better than the hole in the ground used by the other people, that after freezing weather set in the neighbors were supplied from the Jones cellar until the stock was exhausted.

The log house had a clapboard roof. The clapboards were about four feet long and laid two feet to the weather, and were held in place by weight poles and these were held in place by "runs," or pieces of wood eighteen or twenty inches long, fitted between the weight poles near the ends. It was almost impossible to construct a clapboard^{roof} tight enough to keep the snow from blowing through the cracks and into the room. In some homes canopies were arranged over the beds and in this manner the sleeping occupants were kept from being snowed under during the night. Each morning after a snow storm it was necessary to scoop up the snow and carry it out before the house became warm enough to melt it.

Brooms were made by taking a hickory sapling two or three inches in diameter and beginning twelve or fifteen inches from one end, shave toward the end with a draw knife, care being taken not to cut the shavings loose. This process was continued until a good sized bunch of shavings was made all around the stick. Then after soaking it in hot water for a short time the shavings were turned down over the end of the stick and bound around with a ~~heavy cord~~^{hickory sapling}, making a first-class broom with which the puncheon floors were swept.

James W. Woodmansee was born in Clermont county, Ohio, December 31, 1816. He was the youngest child of James and Agnes (Hammer) Woodransee, natives of Pennsylvania, and pioneers of Ohio. In 1820 they moved to Jackson county, Indiana, where the mother died in 1829, and the father in 1847. On October 29, 1835, James W. Woodmansee was married to Miss Rachel Hammer, a native of Jackson county, Indiana, who was born November 14, 1819. In September, 1842, with their household goods and family of four children, Mr. and Mrs. Woodmansee left Indiana for the west, where they intended to make their future home. The trip was made in covered wagons. In a short time they arrived in Lee county, Iowa, and bought a piece of land with the expectation of making that their home. However, after raising one crop they found the place was not to their liking, so the following fall they resumed their journey westward, this time coming as far as Decatur county. Here they secured a little shack belonging to Buck Hatfield, south of the present site of Leon, and made that their home for the first month. From there they went to the home of Bryson Miller, a few miles west, and remained until spring. Mrs. Miller was an aunt of Mrs. Woodmansee. In the meantime Mr. Woodransee entered the northeast quarter of Section 31, in what is now Decatur township. But the county was not organized until April 1, 1850, and on July 1, of that year the commissioners divided it into four civil townships, as follows: Garden Grove, Morgan, Burrell, and Hamilton. James Woodmansee and Andrew Still were appointed the first clerks of election in Burrell township.

During the first winter after his arrival in the county, Mr. Woodransee built a double log cabin about 20x40 feet in size near

the northwest corner of his claim, and moved into it the following March. The loft was not completed until several years later, when he built a saw mill and sawed the native lumber for it himself. He was the first permanent settler in this township. Although John Still had previously made a claim in the eastern part of the township, he remained only a short time, which left Mr. Woodrensee the first permanent settler. The combined grist mill and saw mill which he built in 1852 or 1853, was ~~the first in the county, if not~~ in that part of the state. In 1860 he built a brick residence 27x40 feet in size and two stories high, replacing the log cabin of pioneer days. It was still in use in 1932.

In addition to operating his grist mill and saw mill, Mr. Woodrensee was also extensively engaged in farming and stock raising. He also had a blacksmith shop, and did a general blacksmithing business for the people of the surrounding country. In all these enterprises he was eminently successful, and by his fair and upright dealings he secured the confidence and respect of all who knew him. From time to time he added to his original quarter section of land until he became the owner of several hundred acres. At an early day he donated four or five acres of land west of the mill to be used as a cemetery. He also gave an acre of land in the northeast corner of his farm for school purposes, and on this land a log school house was built in 1857.

Mr. and Mrs. Woodmansee were the parents of nine children, the first two having died in ~~an~~ infancy, and the youngest, James, died at the age of one year. The others are as follows:

Ann, married S. A. Millsap 4 boys 5 girls

John, married Miss Mary Ann Cook 2 boys 4 girls

Mary, ^E married ^{John} J. W. McLaughlin, Oct. 19, 1865 3 boys 2 girls

Reuben S., born Feb. 24, 1848, married Miss Cinia ^{J.} Jones, Oct. 17, 1869.
Died April 16, 1923. Buried at Indianapolis.

George, married Miss Lydia B. Luritt 2 boys 1 girl

Susan, married W. H. Grayson 1 boy 2 girls

When Mr. Woodmansee came to Decatur county in 1849, which was three years after Iowa was admitted to the Union and six years before the first railroad train was run in the state, there were a few white settlers in the south part of the county, and the Mormons who had settled at Garden Grove a short time before. Aside from this, there were very few other settlers in the county. Chariton, the county seat of Lucas county, was the nearest town. However, about two and a half miles down Grand River from his place was a band of Indians, consisting of Pottawattamies, Mesquakies, and another tribe. They were under the leadership of Johnnie Green, a Pottawattamie chief, who was a most friendly man, and highly respected by both the Indians and their white neighbors. These Indians were harmless, but often made a great nuisance of themselves by going through the country and begging for something to eat. Usually, two or three went together -- seldom more than three. Entering the house of a white settler, one of them would approach the fire, shivering, and say: "Indian heap sick: want coffee and something to eat." But the amount of food that they would stow away did not indicate that they were seriously ill. There were about 500 of these Indians. They lived in tepees, and surrounding their camp were a great many sugar maple trees, from which they gathered the sap every spring and made it into maple sugar. Just how long they had been here is not known, but about 1852 or 1853 they left these parts for another location. However, for a number of years they returned for a few weeks each spring and made maple sugar at their old camp. It is said that Johnnie Green's last years were spent in Marshall county, Iowa, and that he was buried at Albion.

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Clabourn Jones was born in Tennessee, August 13, 1805, and was married in the same state, to Miss Mahala Keller, who also was born in Tennessee, October 10, 1805. The date of their marriage is uncertain, but it probably was about 1826. In their native state they were engaged in farming, and continued in that business until about 1840, the year that William Henry Harrison was elected President of the United States, when they decided to change their location, and removed to Owen county, Indiana. Here they remained until 1856, when they made another change, this time coming on to Decatur county, Iowa.

Mr. Jones' oldest daughter and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. William Jourdan, having decided to make their home in the west, left the old home in Indiana about the year 1854, and located in Decatur county, Iowa. They were so well pleased with the new country that they prevailed upon Mr. Jones to come west, which he did the following spring, making the trip on horseback. By the next spring he had decided to make Decatur county his permanent home and was preparing to return to Indiana to get his family when Mrs. Jones wrote him that one of their neighbors, a Mr. Ogle and family, would in a short time drive through to Missouri to locate, and that she could come at the same time and save him the time and expense of returning for them.

The Ogles had a team of horses, a team of cattle and two wagons. Mrs. Jones had a large Canastota wagon drawn by two teams of cattle. One son was old enough to help with the driving. And with this equipment the two families set out for their new home in the far west. Mr. Ogle would go ahead with the team of horses, pick out a good camping place and have everything ready

for the other members of the party by the time they arrived. The two families came together as far as Missouri, where the Ogles located. And from there to Decatur county, Iowa, Mrs. Jones and her family made the trip alone. Although there was no regularly traveled road and no fences to help guide them to their destination, they had no trouble in finding their way.

MR. JONES FIRST LEASED AND THEN BOUGHT SOME LAND OF A MR. COVINGTON, IN SECTION 19, DECATUR TOWNSHIP, AND BUILT A LOG CABIN ON IT, WHICH WAS THE HOME OF THE FAMILY FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS.

It required twenty-one days to make the 500-mile trip with the ox teams. But as three of these days were Sundays when no traveling was done, they really covered the 500 miles in eighteen days, or approximately twenty-eight miles a day.

Mr. Jones first leased and then bought some land of a Mr. Covington, in Section 19, Decatur township, and built a log cabin on it, which was the home of the family for a number of years. It was about one and one-half miles north of the J. W. Woodmansee home.

There was a log cabin on the farm which Mr. Jones at first leased and then bought of a Mr. Covington, in Section 19, Decatur Township. After making their home here for four or five years, the farm was exchanged for a 20-acre farm adjoining it on the east. Here a frame residence was built which they occupied the remainder of their lives. It was a two-roomed house about 16 x 22 feet in size and one story high. All the lumber used in the building was sawed at the Woodmansee mill. Hand made shingles were used for the roof. The house was in the northeast corner of that of J. W. Woodmansee, who came here from Indiana seven years earlier than Mr. Jones.

Most of the early settlers in this locality came from Indiana -- a few from Ohio. Many of them had not been very thrifty in their eastern homes and their removal to Iowa did not seem to make any great change for the better. However, there were exceptions to this rule, and one of the most progressive families in the neighborhood was that of Mr. and Mrs. Clabourn Jones, who came here from Indiana in 1856. Clabourn Jones was born in Tennessee, August 13, 1805, and was married in the same state, to Miss Mahala Keller, who also was born in Tennessee, October 10, 1805. The date of their marriage is uncertain, but it probably was about 1826. In their native state they were engaged in farming, and continued in that business until about 1840, the year that William Henry Harrison was elected President of the United States, when they decided to change their location, and removed to Owen county, Indiana. Here they remained until 1856, when they made another change, this time coming on to Decatur county, Iowa, where they entered some Government land in Decatur township, built a log house, and began the task of making a home in a new and sparsely settled section of the country. It required twenty-one days to make the 500-mile trip with an ox team. But as three of these days were Sundays when no traveling was done, they really covered the 500 miles in eighteen days, or approximately twenty-eight miles a day. Their home was about a mile northeast of that of J. W. Woodmansee, who came here from Indiana seven years earlier. Mr. and Mrs. Jones were the parents of ten children, five of whom came to Iowa with them, the other five being married, remained in Indiana. Mr. Jones died April 25, 1864, and Mrs. Jones died March 13, 1898. Both are buried in the Woodmansee cemetery. Following are the children:

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Brooms were made by taking a hickory sapling two or three inches in diameter and beginning twelve or fifteen inches from one end, shave toward the end with a draw knife, care being taken not to cut the shavings loose. This process was continued until a good sized bunch of shavings was made all around the stick. Then after soaking it in hot water for a short time the shavings were turned down over the end of the stick and bound around with hickory splits, making a first-class broom with which the puncheon floors were swept.

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